ELECTORAL REFORM:

WHICH IS IT TO BE,

THE SECOND BALLOT,

THE ALTERNATIVE VOTE,

OR

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION?

The Proportional Representation Society.

OUR AIMS.

1. **To reproduce the opinions of the electors in Parliament and other public bodies in their true proportions.**

2. To secure that the **majority** of electors shall **rule** and all considerable **minorities** shall be **heard.**

3. To give **electors a wider freedom** in the choice of representatives.

4. To give **representatives** greater independence from the financial and other pressure of small sections of constituents.

5. To ensure to **parties** representation by their ablest and most trusted members.

OUR METHODS.

1. **Unite existing constituencies into larger ones returning three or more members each,** having regard to natural divisions of the country, such as large towns, counties or parts of counties; give each constituency so formed a number of members proportionate to its electorate, the total number of the House of Commons being the same as at present, or smaller.

2. **Decide elections by a proportional system,** such as that known as the **"SINGLE TRANSFERABLE VOTE,"** under which

    A. **Each elector has one vote** and one vote only.

    B. **The elector votes**

        (a) By placing the figure 1 opposite the name of the candidate he likes best.

        He is also invited to place

        (b) The figure 2 opposite the name of his second choice.

        (c) The figure 3 opposite the name of his third choice, and so on, numbering as many candidates as he pleases in the order of his preference.

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WHICH IS IT TO BE, THE SECOND BALLOT, THE ALTERNATIVE VOTE, OR PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION ?

What is the best method of obtaining the proper representation of the people in Parliament? The question demands the immediate and earnest attention of all who believe in democratic principles. The present British system of election is admittedly unsatisfactory. With few exceptions (and those destined shortly to disappear) the country is divided into constituencies returning one member each. Therefore, when more than two candidates stand for a constituency it often happens that a candidate supported by a minority of voters is returned as a member. This is an evil. If multiplied in a large number of constituencies it may lead to a House of Commons controlled by a minority of the people—in other words, to a perversion of democracy. The same fatal result might happen, and has indeed happened, even when only two candidates stand for single constituencies, through one party winning many seats by small majorities, while the strength of the other is wasted in larger majorities in a smaller number of victories.

Two palliatives of the present system have been advocated widely : these are (1) the Second Ballot, or (2) the Alternative Vote (a mere shortened form of the second ballot). Neither of these methods go to the root of the evil. Both of them maintain the vicious principle of the single-member constituency, by which an elector on the losing side is " represented " by a person whom he did not elect. Advocates of the single-member system should ask themselves these questions—Why should a person be often forced to vote for a candidate from whom he radically differs on many points, or else abstain altogether ? And why should the minority in every constituency—and even a majority in many three-cornered contests—be entirely unrepresented ? The Alternative Vote will indeed cure the anomalies of three-or-more-cornered contests, but the greater danger and injustice of the single-member system is left untouched. The only true method is to have large constituencies returning several members, giving to each party in the constituency a representation proportionate to its strength, in other words

Proportional Representation.

The movement for proportional representation is world-wide ; it is supported by leading public men in every state, whether Socialists or Individualists, who accept democracy as the only possible basis of government for civilized communities. Under modern conditions **democracy cannot exist without proportional representation** for modern democracy involves the true representation of the people in Parliament.

In Great Britain, proportional representation is advocated by men of light and leading in every political party—by Lord Courtney, Lord Milner, Lord Hugh Cecil, Mr. J. M. Robertson, M.P., Mr. Henry Vivian, M.P., Mr. G. H. Roberts, M.P., and Mr. H. G. Wells—to name only a few supporters.

In Germany, Bernstein says, " in all possible places representatives of social democracy have . . . declared for the proportional representation of the people."

In France, where proportional representation has lately won a signal triumph Jaurès says, " the law of contests in single-member constituencies is the law of murder—' Thou shalt kill thine adversary ;' the law of contests in large constituencies, with proportional representation, is the law of justice—' Each shall have his fair share.' In this way the personal struggles which to-day so deplorably distort the conflict of ideas, would be greatly modified if not abolished altogether."

In a short time proportional representation will have become the law for the election of the French Chamber of Deputies.

In the United States of America proportional representation was a plank of the Socialist platform in the last Presidential campaign, and is supported by many men who dislike Boss rule in politics.

Proportional Representation works justice between contending parties. Compare these results :

(1) THE SECOND BALLOT.

Germany has the second ballot but not proportional representation. In 1907 the general elections resulted thus :—

Parties.	Votes	Seats actually obtained.	Seats in proportion to votes.
Social Democrats	3,259,029	43	115
Centre Party	2,179,743	105	77
National Liberal	1,630,581	54	57
Conservative	1,532,072	84	54
Radical Parties	1,233,933	49	43

At the first ballot in these elections the Social Democrats headed the poll in 73 constituencies, which was less than their fair proportion. The second ballots reduced their number to 43. Thus the second ballots actually produced injustice. In the previous election in 1903 the Social Democrats were at the head of the poll in 122 constituencies. The second ballots reduced this number to 81.

Austria has the second ballot but not proportional representation. The Social Democrats in the 1907 elections won 86 seats, and the Christian Socialists 96. The Social Democrats had over a million votes, the Christian Socialists 531,000.

The Second Ballot has proved a failure wherever it has been tried.

(2) Proportional Representation.

On the other hand proportional representation, and no second ballot, is used for the election of the Popular House of Parliament in Finland and Tasmania, for the Senate in United South Africa, and for both Houses in Belgium and Sweden. Some of its results are :—

Belgian Elections, 1908.

Parties.	Votes.	Seats actually obtained.	Seats in proportion to votes.
Catholics	515,926	37	36
Liberals and Socialists	633,258	43	44*
Christian Democrats ...	16,095	1	1

* The figures for Liberals and Socialists are given together because in several constituencies these parties presented a common list.

Finnish Elections, 1909.

Parties.	Votes.	Seats actually obtained.	Seats in proportion to votes.
Socialists	336,659	84	80
Old Finns	198,635	47	47
Young Finns	121,006	28	29
Swedish Nationalists...	104,107	25	25
Agrarians	56,649	13	13
Religious Labourers ...	23,120	2	6

Tasmanian Elections, 1909.

Parties.	Votes.	Seats actually obtained.	Seats in proportion to votes.
Labour Party	19,067	12	11·7
Non-Socialist	29,893	18	18·3

In other words **proportional representation produces justice, and gives to every party its due.**

No objection on the score of cost: It is objected that the cost of elections in large constituencies will be much greater than in single-member constituencies. This is not so. The cost to the party will be diminished, whatever may be the case with the individual candidate. Compare the cost of the contests in a city returning seven members and divided into seven constituencies, with the cost in the same city polled as one constituency returning seven members. In the first case seven constituencies are fought by (perhaps) 17 or 18 candidates, each with his separate organisation and separate expenses. Every candidate has to concentrate on the wavering voters who hold the balance. In this concentration great is the advantage of the money power. In the second case the whole constituency is fought by (perhaps) 12 candidates, for no party can hope to monopolise the representation, and no party will run useless candidatures. If three parties are fighting, each party and not each candidate will have its separate organisation and its separate expenses. It is unlikely that for a party running (say) four candidates, the total bill will be four times the separate bills for four single-member constituencies. It is certain that the total bill will not be seven times the separate bills for seven single-member constituencies. The total amount spent on elections will thus be greatly diminished, and the illegitimate power of money will be weakened. This is all to the good.

Further, the candidates will not, to avoid destruction, have to court the wavering voters. A well-organised party will get its due share of representation without subscribing to clubs and flower-shows. Even under present conditions expenses do not vary directly with votes polled. Good organisation saves expenses. Thus, in Southampton in 1906, Mr. W. S. Sanders polled 8172 votes at a cost of £119 4s. 3d., while the two Conservative candidates, the highest of whom polled 7970 votes, spent £1650 0s. 1d. And good organisation is easier when a single city is one constituency than when a number of separate divisions of a city have each to be separately organised. **In the Johannesburg Municipal Elections in November, 1909, when the whole city was polled as a single constituency with proportional representation, the expenses of the three Labour candidates were officially returned at £6 each.** An ounce of fact is worth a pound of theory.

Give Justice to all Parties.

Support Proportional Representation.

c. **A candidate,** to ensure election, **need not poll a majority,** but only a certain **proportion** of the votes cast.

> This proportion, which is the least number of votes sufficient to render certain the election of a candidate, is called the **Quota.** Thus, in a single-member constituency a candidate who polls one more than half the votes must be elected; the quota is therefore one more than half. So, in a two-member constituency the quota is one more than a third, for not more than two candidates can poll so much; and in a three-member constituency one more than a fourth, and so on. Therefore, to ascertain the quota, divide the total of the votes by one more than the number of seats to be filled and add one to the result.

D. **The returning officer** ascertains the result of the election as follows:

(1) He counts each ballot paper as one vote to the candidate marked 1 thereon; he also counts the total number of votes.

(2) He ascertains the quota.

(3) He declares elected the candidates who have received the quota.

(4) He transfers in strict proportions the surplus votes of those candidates who have received more than the quota, and credits them to the unelected candidates indicated by the figures 2, 3 and so on, as the next preferences of the electors whose votes are transferred. This operation renders all votes effective; votes are used and not wasted.

(5) He declares elected those candidates who, after the transfer of surplus votes, have obtained the quota.

(6) He eliminates the candidates lowest on the poll one after another by transferring their votes in accordance with the wishes of their supporters to the candidates indicated as next preferences. This process is continued until the required number of candidates, having each obtained the quota, have been declared elected, or the number of candidates not eliminated is reduced to the number of seats still vacant, in which event the candidates not eliminated are declared elected.

NOTE.—Other systems of proportional representation are in use in other countries. Membership of the Proportional Representation Society does not imply the acceptance of any particular system.

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